

[Italian Shoe Machine Worker, Beverly #10]

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. Living Lore in

New England

TITLE Italian Shoe Machine Worker, Beverly

WRITER Merton R. Lovett #10

DATE 5/18/39 WDS. PP. 4

CHECKER DATE

SOURCES GIVEN (?) Interview

COMMENTS [Mass.?] 1938-9 Paper No. 10

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Interview with

Roland Damiani

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by

Merton R. Lovett

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Library of Congress

"As well as remembered."

Interview with Roland Damiani By Merton R. Lovett

(from memory)

"Yes, I was at the testimonial banquet. The Italians are all sorry to have Miss Driver retire. She has been Principal of the Washington School for thirty-one years. With a new principal, the School will be different."

"Sure, I was a pupil at her school. Most of the Italians lived in the Washington district."

"Why did the Italians admire her? Well, she was always kind and fair. She treated the Italian children as nicely as those of American birth. She also was a real friend and aid to the older Italians."

"That's right, she got acquainted with Italian parents. Miss Driver had many meetings for them, also parties. She taught the mothers American ways."

"It was an Italian banquet all right. The Community Club managed it. Over three hundred sat down to dinner."

"No, I guess that no other principal ever received such a tribute. She deserved it. The Mayor made a fine speech. So did Mr. Silverio."

"Oh, I did not make a real speech - just a few words from memories and the heart."

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"Well, you'd be surprised, I was often a source of trouble in school, I liked fun and mischief."

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"I was punished many times. Once I was punished with a ruler. Nowadays things are different. Some of the boys would be helped by a licking."

"What did I do? Many things, but nothing serious. I threw spit balls. I teased the girls. The girl who sat in front of me - I put her hair in my inkwell. The time I got licked, I hit the teacher with a sling-shot."

"Miss Driver understood boys. Once I fought with an Irish kid. It was recess. She made us sit together in her office. After school, she talked to us, and we shook hands."

"Yes, I know that many American parents did not want their children to go to the Washington school. It was because they didn't understand. They were snobs. There is no better school in the city. I never had any patience with such parents."

"You know that the Italians are just as smart as any, and just as good. The American children do not have any monopoly on manners or brains. Who leads the classes in High School?"

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"Sure, I know, the prejudice has almost disappeared. I'm glad. My children will have every opportunity. They are as good Americans as yon own, Mr. Lovett."

"Thanks. It is natural for parents to be proud. I do not think that an Italian name is much handicap now."

"Oh, I see little change at the United Shoe Machinery."

"You have heard again that some rifles or guns will be made at the factory? I know nothing definite, I have seen no preparations."

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"Yes, there will be another entertainment to raise money for the Relief Association. Miss Miriam Winslow, the great dancer, will appear at the High School on Friday."

"Of course, I belong to the Relief Association. Everybody does."

"It is a good insurance. The workmen pay 20 cents each week. If they are sick for more than two weeks, they collect up to fourteen dollars weekly."

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"Yes, there is a limit to the payment. It is, I think, one hundred and fifty dollars. But there are also Hospital bills. Within limits, those are paid also."

"That's right, they have also a hospital at the factory, a nurse and a good doctor. It is open while the factory runs."

"Oh, no, they do not treat accidents only. Every employee who does not feel well, is urged to visit the hospital. They make examinations and give medicine. I'll bet the doctor treats many hang-overs."

"Well, the money raised from entertainments, fairs, etc., provides extra help. Some people need more help than the rules allow. Some wives, widows and children are also helped."

"Such help is decided by the Relief Association visitor. He makes many calls and is very kind."

"Certainly, it is some comfort to know that you will get help if you are sick or hurt. The family does not worry so much."

"Sure, I'll bet you would like some such help if you were sick, Mr. Lovett."